

SURFACING: FINDING AN INDIVIDUAL VOICE BY LIVING  
THE HONEST LANGUAGE OF THE DANCE

by

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## **STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis navigates my journey as a dance artist, transcending movement creation in search of an individual voice through the practice of honest dance language. I believe a present and open dialogue with the body/mind, facilitates honest dance language and thus, discovery of the individual voice. Inspired by Martin Heidegger's *Origin of a Work of Art*, Deborah Hay's *My Body the Buddhist*, and reflections upon "Spin Cycle," my graduate thesis piece, my research integrates honesty as a creative approach in the dance making process. I define honesty in dance making as the ability to access internal movement language as it surfaces and presents itself through exploration. In the context of my research I look at honesty not as value to strive for in a work of art but as an avenue for illuminating individual voice in the creative process. Individuality and honesty are important values in my research because I believe they foster self-trust in artistic development.

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## PREFACE

I have two material fetishes in which I unabashedly indulge: one is for any mundane or stylish pair of red shoes, and the other is for original hand-bound books with empty paper inside, intended to be filled with written memories, musings, and general inquisitive notions of the mind. Every pair of red shoes I own litters the closet floor, faded, scuffed, worn thin, and even broken by constant adorning of the feet that strut when walking, run when late, and dance when happy. In contrast every bound book I own sits on a shelf in its pure and original form, clean, untouched, unruffled, and worst of all un-opened. The pages that sit between the uniquely woven and textured covers remain empty, crisp and unmarked, longing for even a mere scratch or doodle. Occasionally I sit on my bed with one of the books halfway open, a pen tortuously dangling from my right hand. What should I write in this beautiful book? Of course any of these books would make a great journal but why spoil the beauty of the book with the mundane contemplations of my lackluster life? And so I put the book back in the stack of others, stoic with neglect. I don a pair of red shoes, walk, run, and especially dance in search of something more interesting to say.

## INTRODUCTION

I preface my thesis with the image of shoes because, like the red shoes, my body is worn and used. I have the purple bruises, floor burns, and white, flaky calluses of a body exploring a variety of movement styles. Despite this, I feel the movement I create mirrors the empty journals, potentially interesting on the surface, but lacking a real voice from within. I originally believed this lack of expression coincided with a limited movement vocabulary. My desire for increased movement potential fueled my graduate studies, initiating questions about my own artistic abilities. I searched for answers as to where and how I could access more movement potential. Surely there existed a dictionary somewhere for an infinite movement language.

Reflecting on my research and other graduate experiences, I now realize the irrelevance of the external search for more movement. Perhaps the search isn't irrelevant so much as limited in what I could do as an artist with what I find. For what is movement without the voice to express it? What I now seek to understand is how to pen what I create as an author, indeed as an artist. Whatever is missing in the dances I make or the pages I hesitate to write is what I aim to find. And so, I begin a new search by asking two questions: "How do I find my individual voice as a dance artist?" and "how does practicing honest dance language in the creative process facilitate this discovery?"

I define "individual voice" as the unique style or authorship I seek in my creative work. In Chapter 1 I address past habits of censorship in the creative process,



acknowledging my missing voice and my reliance on exterior rather than internal motivations for creating work. In changing these habits for a better approach, I draw inspiration from other dance artists and writers, specifically, Sondra Horton Fraleigh, Carol Press, and Twyla Tharp. Fraleigh and Press address the need for individual expression and voice as artists and human beings. Tharp speaks of honesty as an important aspect of individual expression. My interpretation of their writing illuminates an approach to finding an individual voice that integrates the value of honesty in the creative process. Combining the need for individual voice, and honesty as a possible source to fuel that expression, I introduce the idea of “honest dance language.”

In Chapter 2 I define “honest dance language” as movement arriving through the presence of being in my own body and engaging in a present dialogue with my body’s creative impulses. My definition of “honest dance language” is based Martin Heidegger’s, “The Origin of a Work of Art” found in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter. Heidegger addresses the concept of honesty or “truth arriving” in a work of art from the idea of “being” (Heidegger 58-59). He believes the impulses we follow in the presence of creation are our own truths. I use his concept of truth as a means to define honesty in a creative context and provide support for it as means to self-discovery. In my research, I define honesty as following instinct in the creative process and disclosing, rather than censoring, movement language that arrives in the moment. I answer questions surrounding honesty and boldness as a possible motivations for dance making. I also address issues of fear and vulnerability that arrive in practicing creative honesty.

In Chapter 3 I reference dance artist, Deborah Hay's *My Body the Buddhist* to integrate honesty (or presence of being) as a practical approach from a dance artist's perspective. In my creative research, I consider Hay's two questions, "*what if where I am is what I need?*" and "*what if now is here is harmony?*" (Hay 2) I answer creative questions of my own, inspired by Hay, thus fueling a dialogue with the body and discovering internal language in movement creation. I learn to honestly utilize the presence of multiple movement impulses rather than dishonestly leaving ideas unexplored. A large part of my discoveries arrive through movement research collected primarily from my experiences in the graduate dance program at the University of Utah in addition to my participation at the 2009 Seattle Festival for Dance Improvisation.

Chapter 4 describes the process of implementing my theory of individual voice through honest dance language into a dance work. I document and analyze discoveries from the creation of "Spin Cycle," my graduate thesis piece. My discoveries reveal honesty, encompassing the values of trust and allowance, as important components to individual creative practice.

The purpose of my research is not to promote the idea of "honest dance language" as the motivation for making dance or a quality that should be measured or determined present in a final dance product. I recognize that honesty is a broad concept with multiple definitions and varying states of importance based on opinion. In art, honesty is a subjective phenomenon that can't really be measured. I therefore look at honesty not as an objective to achieve but as an avenue or approach in the creative process to open and discover movement language in the body, thereby facilitating individual voice as a dance artist. Through this research I seek to overcome a tendency to censor movement

language already in my body and honor an individual voice in the work I create. In a personal struggle (such as this thesis presents,) I feel only I can assess my practice of honest dance language and whether I am then able to claim an authorship or voice in the work I create. Thus I acknowledge my thesis to be subjective and write from a narrative point of view using vignettes comprised of personal experiences and discoveries throughout this research process. I use other authors and artists to support and connect my ideas and to draw creative theory from my personal experiences.

My thesis began by seeking more movement potential from exterior sources such as teachers, other choreographers, and peers. While the inspiration I received from these sources benefited my movement inquiry, I discover that my greatest potential arrives in allowing movement language, and thus my voice, to surface from my own being. This thesis indeed becomes a very personal journey, yet I believe my research is relevant to more than my own artistic struggle. I feel at some point every dance artist seeks to define who they are and how to represent their own unique abilities and interpretations in the work they create. As artists we may all be at different stages and have different approaches to progress in this journey. I simply wish to add my own experience as further validation for the existence of individuality and voice in the realm of art and life. In striving toward an individual voice by living the honest language of the dance, I personally find an evolution not only as a dance artist but also as a human being, an individual who creates and thus lives more fully.

## CHAPTER 1

### UNSTITCHING THE VOICE

*Speak*, a movie about an adolescent girl who is raped and loses her ability to communicate, opens with the image of a young woman drawing on her lips in the mirror. What first appears to be a normal teenage girl putting on lipstick changes at closer look, revealing that it isn't the outline of lips being drawn but actual stitches or seams slashing vertically and tightly across her mouth as would be seen on a scarecrow or zombie-like creature. Her mouth appears to be literally sewn together, a metaphor for what the audience later learns is her inability to say what needs to be said.

I have never been through a traumatic event that could compare with the above plot but must admit that I do identify with the sewn-mouth image. It hits home in a way that frightens and forces me to ask the question, "what am I not saying?" I struggle to find my individual voice in a constantly shifting world of values and expectations. I often dare not open my mouth, especially when I believe that what I say may not be worth voicing. I was never consciously aware of this reservation until I struggled to find myself as a dance artist. This desired authorship brought me into my graduate studies. In searching for my individual voice, I reflect on the avenue of my body. If I can't open my mouth, perhaps I could have the same trouble opening my body in full disclosure of my individuality. In this chapter, I examine my missing voice and why I believe it is important to overcome censorship and embrace individuality as an artist.

I perceive a habit of censorship in the way I speak and in the way I move. Despite this struggle, I find a more open dialogue through movement. The inhibitions I feel seem less when moving than when speaking. Movement becomes an avenue of communication and sometimes even my life's sustainability or as Wilhelm von Humboldt states, "only speech enables man to be the living being he is as man. It is as one who speaks that man is – man" (Humboldt, in Heidegger, 187). Likewise, Margaret H'Doubler, a pioneer in dance education, writes, "The various arts differ in their outward form but they all have a common source in the fundamental human need of revealing the inner life in an external pattern" (H'Doubler 55). I do not believe that my need for making dance must be to reveal my inner life. I do believe that my choices to censor the body reveal a hesitation to voice my own individuality. Speaking through movement was never a conscious endeavor for me, yet I agree with ballet choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre's statement, "No one has suspected... (Dance's) power of speaking to the heart" (Noverre 11). The language of the body is deeply powerful but the mind is equally powerful in censoring this language. I am a skilled censor. I would prefer to be an artist.

Whatever my reasons for censorship, I am missing opportunities for creative exploration and individual expression. Finding an individual voice means engaging in active dialogue with the body, not censoring the inner topics of conversation. H'Doubler further writes, "The impelling force in art creation is to be explained by the psychology of feeling and by the need of communication. Every high-strung emotional state which has not found its appropriate expression causes movement by which we instinctively try to get rid of the feeling of restraint" (H'Doubler 51).

Is restraint the cause of censorship? I acknowledge restraint to be a dominant characteristic I possess yet also acknowledge restraint in many life circumstances may be necessary. However, in past artistic endeavors, restraint killed my creative exploration and internal dialogue. I found safety from anticipated judgment in censorship, but in this reservation I also succumbed to bondage, adding stitches to a tightly sewn voice.

If what H'Doubler suggests is true, it seems instinctual to reveal rather than restrain movement language. Yet when accessing conscious internal expression, vulnerability arrives. Enter the censor; possibly exit the artist and the un-spoken voice. Why? Because as a choreographer, I seek a finished form that is acceptable to peers, professors, and other exterior sources. I must decide what I value more, individuality or acceptance. I realize that if acceptance is something I value then it is my own acceptance that matters most.

In *Art & Fear*, David Bales and Ted Orland, write, “the real question about acceptance is not whether your work will be viewed as art, but whether it will be viewed as your art” (Bayles and Orland 45). We may obtain movement vocabulary from exterior sources but who is the author? According to art teacher Anna Audette, to never imitate or look for inspiration from exterior sources could deprive us of important experiences in the quest to discover the individual voice (Audette 30). Yet, when we question our own validity, if we only seek exterior answers, we miss out on solving our own creative problems. We learn new information by watching and doing. It is “how” and “why” the artist brings information to life from the interior that reveals individuality. I may seek inspiration from outside sources, but must learn to make sense of ideas through my individual contexts. As Sondra Horton Fraleigh writes,

I create my body through my choices and my actions; in this I also create myself. My entire lived experience determines my body, my choice to be athletic or sedentary, my habits of walking, talking, eating, and even dreaming result in what I may call at any moment – for that time – my body. My body is a mutable, changeable, living substance. It is continuous with my mind, which is no less subject to temporal change, mutability, growth, and decay, and no less a product of my exercise of choice and free will. (Fraleigh 17)

As Fraleigh suggests, my body is changeable but I must engage in active choice making. I agree that my mind holds equal responsibility in this creative process. It is the process, not the form, which becomes crucial to finding an individual voice; not to put any less value on the form but to recognize that form will be more individual to the creator if the dance takes shape through personal dialogue with an open mind and body. The individual voice is born of this investigation and as we allow the voice to surface we teach ourselves how to speak. We illuminate our own language and how to voice it.

Carol Press writes, “In the processes of the artist.... the individual in everyday life finds, creates, and explores meaning by repeating these dynamics in the small details of one’s existence” (Press 128). The fact that we move and create reveals information about the human being whether we want it to or not. We might as well consciously say what we mean to say, or allow the un-said to passively dwell in our private spheres. Yet while our voices await discovery in full body conversation, they are left hidden.

Why hide our individual voices? Audette comments, “Many artists in recent decades purposely eliminated all traces of their hand...however, your style must come about as the inevitable consequence of who you are” (Audette 54). If our style is inevitable, why not voice it? Individual voice is important because it is more than a reflection of our surroundings and personality; it is a projection of our own authorship. In the literal sense, I never hear two voices exactly alike, except from a voice

impersonator. Artistically, I want to find an individual voice because I no longer want to impersonate another's. Twyla Tharp, American dance artist, also questioned her authorship:

When I started working, I wanted to go to a place where I felt I had a right to be, where I wasn't taking somebody else's material... I was getting to something that was so pure and non-derivative... that I could call it my own and start from there. In terms of the invention of movement, it's a matter of honesty. (Tharp, in Perron, 48)

Tharp speaks of ownership in her work, an ownership I also seek. The idea of honesty speaks to me as a possible approach. By integrating honesty in the creative process, I believe my individual voice becomes a live entity, when before it merely reflected the voices of others. In the following chapter, I explore a philosophy of "honest dance language" as it relates to the discovery of an individual voice. I believe by practicing honesty, my own creative instincts become active. In censorship, leaving things unsaid is like the creative scab that is only scratched at, never leaving and festering internally. As Paul Westerberg said to Billie Joe Armstrong in reference to Green Day's album/musical *American Idiot*, "Your gut and heart told you it was a good idea...By skipping it, you're committing creative suicide" (Spin 52). I am tired of scabs and stitches and I am tired of my creative suicide. I must let go of censorship and acceptance, finally opening creative scratches, bleeding them out and accepting the scars that are left as evidence of happenings. In searching for an individual voice I now seek an honest, personal dance language. This requires a little unstitching - could I have some scissors please?



## CHAPTER 2

### TRUTH OR DARE: HONEST DANCE LANGUAGE

#### ARRIVING IN THE WORK

“Truth or Dare?” is a slumber party game that one like me could only hope would never surface in the smorgasbord of toilet papering, pillow-fights, and smearing of toothpaste on the unlucky adolescent’s face who fell asleep first. I dreaded “Truth or Dare” like I dread a visit to the dentist, a math test, or even perhaps having my own hands cut off with a dull ax - anything but this vulnerable game! I strategically instigated toilet paper shenanigans to get everyone out of the house before being forced to disclose my private sphere or expose my raw lack of courage in unknown dares.

Is this private or conservative nature a crime such that I feel I must offer my own two hands as compensation? Perhaps only in an artistic world where I wish to be completely open, honest and bold in voicing my own individuality. I now believe this individuality comes from practicing honest dance language in the creative process. I define “honest dance language” as movement arriving through the presence of being in my own body and engaging in a present dialogue with my body’s creative impulses. I define honesty as revealing truth, and I define truth as a form of reality subject to change based on the presence of impulse and decision. I acknowledge honesty could be defined in multiple ways. But as it becomes integrated into my creative philosophy, my belief in honesty is not an objective or a moral obligation to meet as an artist. I believe honesty in

the realm of artistry is an avenue for understanding individuality in both spontaneous exploration and creative representation of our ideas. This theory is inspired by Martin Heidegger's "Origin of a Work of Art." Heidegger speaks of "truth arriving" in the work of art. For my purposes, I use his word "truth" as a way to understand creative honesty. Heidegger suggests truth and creation go hand in hand, stating:

We are able to characterize creation as follows: to create is to cause something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth. The work's becoming a work is a way in which truth becomes and happens. (Heidegger 58)

I believe honesty in the creative context to be a self-disclosure of truths through an open dialogue with body/mind. The language that arrives becomes our truths, an avenue for individual creative exploration. Honest dance language thrives in the process of creation, disclosing truth by concealing nothing. Heidegger also states:

Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet uncovered, the un-covered in the sense of concealment....Truth is the primal conflict in which, always in some particular way, the Open is won within which everything stands and from which everything withholds itself that shows itself and withdraws itself as a being. (Heidegger 58-59)

Truth is important to my philosophy of honest dance language because in a movement context, truth references reality, impulse, and instinct. Determining whether movement is truthful or not becomes highly debatable in this theory. I don't believe I judge movement impulse in retrospect and determine its truthfulness; to harness truth in the creative process I believe we live in the moment. If we can access the immediate channel of impulse, we achieve truth in a sense of reality because the movement was instinctive and immediate. Creating honest dance language means accepting movement as it arrives, giving it exploration and life before discarding it in the choreographic process. Modern dance pioneer Martha Graham states:

There is a vitality, a life force, and energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares to other expressions. It is your business to keep open and aware directly to the urges that activate you. Keep the channel open. (Graham, in Strunk 84)

Honesty in the work of art is about creation in its purest form, a process belonging to the artist alone. Honesty exists in our thoughts, our movement impulses and in the choices we make by creating a representation of our exploration in finished art form. I am learning that ideas only take the artist so far. At some point ideas must be realized in motion or concept. Living an honest dance language means trusting my conscious decisions in thought, action, and creation, allowing moments of truth to happen.

“Allowing” is the important word in my last statement. If we “force” truth for the sake of truth, we actually undermine it. Nietzsche suggests that the modern society places too much value on truth and that by seeking it we actually undermine or falsify it (Kirkland 20). I agree with Nietzsche that if I seek honesty to be “right” or to assess movement as “good,” I undermine truth. When we associate judgments of truth with right, wrong, good, bad or one standard, truth becomes facade. I wish to associate my own judgments of truth with what is “real,” what “exists,” and how I choose to use the exploration in choreography.

In his commentary on Heidegger’s *Fundamental Ontology*, Jacques Taminiaux interprets Heidegger’s idea of being: “Being simply means to be present there at the present moment. It means presence at hand” (Taminiaux, in Durfee and Rodier, 74). The dance artist should not live in the past or future self in the creative process but find an intuition of the present, drawing inspiration from the “here and now” not from the foreign

or what hasn't happened yet. We get to the *what hasn't happened yet* by working in the present.

In the present our conscious comes to life, making sense of our existing language. Audette writes, "Many artists experience the flash of a new idea, followed by a slowly dawning awareness that they've known about it vaguely for a long time. They just weren't ready to recognize it" (Audette 30). Recognition of the known becomes recognition of our inner being. The known is a self-realization of inner information. Heidegger also references the known in creative endeavors through ancient Greeks and their word for "knowing." He writes, "Greeks call artist and craftsmen by the same name; *technites*... The word *techne* denotes rather a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present..." (Heidegger 57). Whatever creative challenge we encounter, we must first encounter what is known, from which we draw new invention. We expand language by voicing the known. My theory becomes a circular support system; we find voice by practicing honest dance language; we find honest dance language by voicing it.

Now, if I went to a slumber party with other dance artists or even an audience and they asked me "truth or dare?" I probably would say "truth." Yet this is only half the game. The risk factor still exists. As dance artists, we challenge ourselves to take risks in sheer physicality and bold artistic statement. Perhaps by taking risks we believe we claim originality or, perhaps it's about being noticed by other artists. Taking risks may only be a self-imposed mandate, yet my creative record holds no daring exploits of choreography and I ask, "Is risk taking necessary? If it's taking risks for the sake of risk,

is it honest? Is risk taking a desire to be bold and is this a valid motivation for dance making?”

I believe the words “bold” and “risk” mean the courage to do anything and own the statements we make. Yet, as I continue to examine my past and imagine my future creative work, being bold in my movement choices is not so bold as being honest. If I creatively engage my unique truth, there is no reason I shouldn’t dare to voice it. Bayles and Orland write: “The lessons you are meant to learn are in your work. To see them, you need only look at the work clearly, without judgment, without need or fear...” (Bales and Orland 36). We become artists by turning inward, exploring our unique realities, and boldly revealing them in our creative work. Dr. Richard C. Cabot states, “When you tell the truth about any opinion, feeling or experience of yours, you take a step on the creative path, because you are you and your life and growth are unique. Your truthfulness will be originality if you are not copying another’s blue-book” (Cabot 318). Honest language arrives in revealing our individuality. The dare factor exists when, in honesty, we disclose greater depths of our interiors. Rather than sweeping the dirt under the rug, we should dig more of it up.

In voicing honest dance language, there is an ever increasing paradox between truth and fear versus dare and do. But I find a self-transformation in making the paradox of “truth or dare” more of a relationship. This philosophy is daring, because in the vulnerability honesty requires, we disclose our private spheres. Disclosure of the private sphere is not a mandate, but it is an avenue in which we come to greater exploration even if we only reveal what we find to ourselves. But for the sake of creation and through creation, life – I think the risk is worth it. I may not always know what I want to say, but

whatever it may be, I want it to be daring. But daring, only because it is the deepest truth and belief in me. I want it to be meaningful in that it came from me and was of deep understanding and relationship. I believe this honest relationship is where my individual voice lies. In discovering my individual voice and practicing honest dance language, there is no “truth or dare,” but there is definitely a “truth and dare.”

## CHAPTER 3

### BODIES OF WATER, BODIES OF INFORMATION: PRACTICING HONEST DANCE LANGUAGE

Have you ever examined the ice of a frozen lake after a day of skating? Do you ever wonder what happens to the ice beneath the scarred surface, marked with swirls, divots, and sprayed ice? Yet, why wonder about below when there is so much to see on the surface? What value is obtained in thoroughly examining the ice and subsequently water underneath? I ask because whether it is a frozen body of water or my own body, diving deep into the language of my body is the new challenge I take on. For me, finding my own interior depth means chiseling through a rather thick ice block of contained vulnerability. It requires a consistent scratching, effort, force, release, and sometimes pain. In the past I readily passed the chisel to other owners, eager to see their discoveries, secure in the habit that I didn't have to reveal anything. However now as I discover my individuality, voicing the language of my own depths, I think I'll hold on to that chisel for a while and see what words are below my surface. Time to dive in and get wet, swimming, no longer skating.

#### Swimming the Creative Channel

I am now beginning to discover the vast pool of information my body holds. Bella Lewitsky writes, "Movement is self-descriptive...the book of the body must be

turned to as frequently as other textbooks” (Lewitsky 16). It is in the practice of turning to the body that I believe honesty surfaces and my individual voice, is revealed. I want to better create situations in the studio that enable this to happen. I began by reading *My Body the Buddhist* by choreographer/lecturer Deborah Hay. I am particularly drawn to a goal she has for her students. “Students learn not to hate their bodies for its inadequacies, they orient toward the body as a generative source of ideas” (Hay 1). I often feel inadequacy in my body and admit that I have moments of hatred when I cannot physically realize an idea of my own or another choreographer or technique teacher. In considering Hay’s goal, I question how I can expect my body to produce material when my attitude toward my body is negative. How can I honor my body’s ideas when I do not honor my body?

I discover a more positive, functional attitude in answering Deborah Hay’s questions, “what if where I am is what I need?” and, “what if now is here is harmony?” By practicing Hay’s movement inquiry, I discover avenues for addressing Heidegger’s theory of truth arriving in presence by engaging honest dance language. Like Hay “I accept the fact that I cannot attain a perfect practice and instead use my energy to remember to engage the practice. In this way, I create futures I cannot achieve and then practice being here as the means for completing a day’s work” (Hay 2).

Before reading *My Body the Buddhist*, the questions, “what if where I am is what I need?” and “what if now is here is harmony?” were first introduced to me at the 2009 Seattle Festival for Dance Improvisation in Karen Schaefer’s lecture, “Yes to the Parts.” Posing Hay’s two questions at an improvisation activity, Schaefer introduced me to the concepts of acceptance and presence, that where I was in my body was more important



than where it would go. Finding presence in my movement became a self-acceptance and subsequently an opening to more of myself. Because I also had the objective, “yes to the parts,” I wasn’t searching for one place or one major truth from which to work. Every live being was up for grabs. It was one of the first conscious movement experiences in which I honestly conversed with my body. I felt liberated in movement because I wasn’t choosing one idea over another, but fully experiencing my body. I can relate to Hay’s words, “I feel like the tower of babble (Babel). Millions of voices speak from my body at once – no one voice more dominant – a deliberate exercise to outwit the need to encapsulate” (Hay 20). In my own improvisation, no longer searching for one exterior shape, I was swimming in movement, living and breathing wholeness through more spaces in my body.

Deborah Hay writes, “I abandon holding on to the shape of me... I am movement without looking for it” (Hay 2). Like the ice on a lake, shapes become secure places of form and structure. By liquefying these places from time to time we find other possibilities. Would that our bodies actually became and moved as water and we only needed diverse realities to inhabit for a time. We could melt and travel anywhere in search of new forms and possibilities. This super-human power would be most advantageous to dancers craving an expansive movement language. However as we learn from myths and comic books, super human power is a slippery balance, which comes at a price. In the power to inhabit unlimited movement forms, the price is adopting vulnerability and engaging in a more intimate conversation with the body.

In *Intimacy or Integrity*, Thomas B. Kasulis defines intimacy as making known what is innermost: “It is essentially a sharing of innermost qualities” (Kasulis 28).

Internal conversation with the body is a means to become intimately acquainted with its impulses and through impulse, the body's language. Durfee and Rodier write, "we are constantly intrigued by the fact that we are a speaking and writing animal, that there seems to be some deep intimacy between man's very being and his linguisticity" (Durfee, Rodier 1). This acquaintance deepens over time but it does take time and certainly practice. Hay asks:

How many dance students dance alone uninterruptedly for at least forty minutes daily, outside of rehearsing, choreographing, or physically stretching? Why is this not a four-year requirement for every college dance student? How else can a person develop an intimate dialogue with the body? (Hay 1)

Clearly the intimate relationship with the body Hay speaks of can only be obtained through practice. I have been fortunate to experience a great deal of practice in my graduate studies. I have begun and am still investing in a relationship with my body and its movement language. This relationship has thrived the most from time spent in the studio, both in technique and composition classes and especially, in those "after hours" when the building and studio were empty excepting myself.

Technique class before my graduate experience was always a means to become stronger, more athletic, and more coordinated. Now it is a space for learning body conversation. The movement objectives become more personal and meaningful. Technique class is time spent in association with presence of mind and body, the conscious recognition of deep sensorial truths in the body and all its capability. Technique is a time to gain inspiration from the exterior, trying on my professor's movement, and then allowing my body to make sense of the language on its own terms. I engage in deep internal logic to create external patterns on the surface of the body.

Creating work for composition classes meant late hours in the dance building when the studio was cold and silent except for the buzzing of florescent lights and my unbalanced steps and weight shift in searching for something new. I often directed anger and ill will at myself when being stuck in movement, not knowing where else to go. Yet, out of this struggle came a familiarity with my body. I was surprised to recognize a newly emerging movement language. It took time to acknowledge any transformation because I thought change would feel new, risky, and maybe even triumphant. New movement impulses began to reveal themselves to me not as bold new acquaintances, but trusted old friends. I was changing not because I miraculously developed new abilities but because I began to liberate truths in my body that already existed; I just never relied on them before – I never gave them life. As I became acquainted with my body's potential I developed greater movement capabilities, not in striving for greater movement but in allowing the capability of my own unique dance language to surface and breathe. In creation, Heidegger states, “we never come to thoughts, they come to us” (Heidegger 5). Yet he also says, “to speak is to be diving.” In the presence of swimming my own creative sphere, I can allow movement language and truths to surface. Perhaps there is even more than one individual voice. But as both Hay and Heidegger urge, I must do the work. I must first dive in.

### Navigating Choreography Through Better Questions

Swimming in all this creative practice is definitely a more liberating, honest experience for me. Yet as I discovered in Chapter 2, somewhere in our pool of information, choices must be made and priority given to ideas we value more in creating

a representation of our discoveries. How do we maintain the truth we find? Cabot says the laboratory is the place a scientist or doctor can be most honest because that's where the information is purest. The laboratory of a pathologist can be compared with the studio of a dance artist. In the studio, an improvisation is perhaps where movement is at its purest and its most honest depending on the presence we give the exploration. However at some point, just as the diagnosis of a disease must be relayed with care to a patient, if we choose, so must our movement/choreography be presented to the audience. As humans, we succumb to bias, taste, or reservation based on cultural tradition or sensitivities. These may cloud the purity of movement information in the editing process. Can we maintain truth in regard to our choreography? Or is true honesty in movement only possible with spontaneity? I believe we can maintain honesty beyond spontaneity by asking better questions of our work in the crafting process.

In past work, questions would often arise such as “is this right?” “Will they like it?” “Has this been done?” “Is this wrong?” We’ve all been told the clichéd proverb “*there are no bad questions;*” however, throughout my graduate studies and also by reading about Deborah Hay’s process, I have learned to ask different questions of myself. What are the right questions; those that enable, rather than hinder my inquiry, leading to the most honest choices in the choreographic process? The key question for me has become not, “what should I do,” but “what am I doing?”

Since my graduate studies I have had the opportunity to set works of choreography on studios, high schools and now a university group. As Hay suggests, my creative practice is not yet perfect nor will it ever be. Hay writes, “It is based on my experience with new material. In order to recognize all the ways I hold onto ideas,

images, suppositions, beliefs, the ways my body attaches to what I think the material ‘is,’ or should feel like, or look, I need to be alone in a studio, noticing the infinitely momentary feedback that arises from my daily performance” (Hay 2). I still have to practice and I still get stuck and would rather wipe the slate clean and start over rather than allow the movement to continue further. Knowing I can’t do that on commissioned time sensitive works, it is easy to ask the horrible “should,” question. But, I am learning to substitute “could” for “should.” Already this becomes a more active approach to solving the problem, rather than the doubting, inhibiting question of should. Because to *whom* am I even asking the question? Only I can determine what I should do as the mover/choreographer and I may only answer that question by first, exploring what I could do. Possibilities must come before solutions. The dance doesn’t start by asking, “what should I do,” I move and decide not what it should be, but what it is. In so doing I give the dance its own presence in which I may find real solutions, thus engaging honesty. Navigating choreography with more honest questions allows me to make honest choices, choices that facilitate rather than hinder creation.

### Canceling Reservations

In the book *Honesty*, Cabot defines the difference between honesty and frankness: Honesty is not malicious or fraught with bad intent, whereas frankness can exist without sensitivity or intelligence as to timing, situations or self-control (Cabot). Frankness sounds negative in this respect but Cabot also speaks of a person being pathologically reserved. I tend to be pathologically reserved in creative choices and how I voice them. A dose of frankness would serve me well. So, at my committee’s suggestion I attended the 2009 Seattle Festival for Dance Improvisation as part of my creative research. This

experience helped me overcome my reservation, finding frankness in my decisions about movement and how I related to myself, and others.

“Is it too late to cancel my reservation?” I wonder as we sit yet again in a circle on a hard wood floor: “How many of these annoying, seemingly spiritual rituals will we do this week?” “Why must we learn each other’s names again and why am I here?” I wonder, as it is my turn to answer this very question. I respond with what I think is an adequate, truthful response: “I came to find more movement potential.” A long pause, a penetrating stare and instructor Nina Little nods and moves to the next person without response. The last person introduces herself, makes her confession and we are instructed to spread out and begin to feel the floor. I have not yet reached the floor and Little does not ask, but states to me that I am new to contact improvisation and that most likely I will feel frustrated and behind. I simply nod, and she finally gives the class the cue to improvise freely. What does she know of my abilities? Why does she assume so little by my circle answer and through no actual observation of what was apparently my limited contact experience? I wonder how she is perceptive enough to ascertain the lack of experience and hesitation I am usually the master of hiding. Feeling exposed as a beginner I spend the rest of the class improvising like a beginner, timid, hesitant, reserved, and contained.

Little pointed out my lack of experience though she did not prosecute me, and class became a new slate altogether. My body became the chalk and I discovered I had a lot to say and could converse with other bodies. I discovered new yet familiar initiative and, I began to recognize the volume of my body’s voice. First I had to recognize how much I reserved myself in dancing with other people. I began to count the number of

times I apologized for a rough, shaky moment in an improvisation, assuming it was my fault, solely taking responsibility for a moment happening between two people. I noticed my tendency to calculate how much I was being lifted, trying to compensate, by making sure my partner got equal weight time.

With all these calculations and self-appraisals, who has space to engage the happenings of the moment? I am so predisposed to making sure everyone else is ok with me that I lose myself in the dance and not in the positive way. I lose what I could potentially say in movement to what I think should be said. Thus, I lose my voice; honest language destroyed, dishonest half-truths take center stage. Finally accepting and letting go of my reservation, I was able take a different approach. Continuing to work with other movers and learning to trust their choices with mine helped me initiate real, spontaneous body conversation.

I discovered my body had the power to speak impulsively. For the first time, movement dialogue existed in the present tense with ideas initiating frank conversation rather than rehearsed monologue. I moved with a fierce quality. Fierce was definitely new but at the same time, so real and familiar. In one particularly raw moment, all sense of reservation left, and a warrior took over. In a duet with a fluid partner, the dance began soft and passive yet seemed to build with force and speed. Without either of us planning a coup, the movement turned into a contentious battle, happening quickly and aggressively. Before I had time to think, I attacked my partner in a streamline charge, crossing the paths of other dancers. I landed stealthily perched on top of her raised shins that had rebounded from her fall. I stared at her face, which was openly surprised and slightly afraid. The moment startled me just as much. How she safely got to the floor

and how I ended up on top of her, I will never know. I do know we both landed safely and ferociously without a hint of hesitation. We not only spoke but also lived an intense, relationship. Without considering whether the movement was appropriate to the music or conducive to the task required of us, I reacted and thus voiced something I had never voiced before. I probably will never dance this exact moment again, yet this violent and beautiful experience was a lesson in letting go of my reservations. I honored an inner voice, violent as it was, and danced something extraordinary, bold, honest and risky. When I began my journey at the Seattle Festival for Dance Improvisation I wished I could cancel my reservations. I learned from the festival, canceling reservations is exactly what I needed to do.

On the surface of the ice, participants are cautioned to skate around vulnerable places. Now I seek vulnerable places, and dive in, cracking and exposing the liquid movement beneath. It can feel dangerous and suffocating, especially when I cannot find a way back out. I may end up being drowned in wet and cold remains of images that don't mean anything. Or, I may find a body of information. It takes exploration, navigated choice making, and courageously overcoming reservation. The creative process is a struggle but living it engages me in honesty because I work through the reality of it. When treading water, all I can do is tread. Out of this struggle I find my honest language and subsequent individual voice not only survives the experience, but actually finds the shore, a home, a place as a dance artist I may call my own.



## CHAPTER 4

### “IT ALL COMES OUT IN THE WASH” THE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES OF MY GRADUATE THESIS WORK, “SPIN CYCLE”

Sometimes discoveries emerge from states of exhaustion. The summer before my last year of graduate school, I was exhausted and looking for air. Defenses down, I was forced to confront who I was as a dance artist and more importantly who I was as a person. This need for an honest confrontation began with a dark night of improvisation and developed over the course of the 2009 Fall Semester, leading to the creation of my thesis piece for the graduate concert held in the Hayes-Christensen Theatre. This chapter describes the discoveries I made throughout these creative experiences, as a mover, a choreographer, and an artist. My thesis piece was new and different for me, because I opened my interior and allowed a very personal dialogue to emerge through my own conscious and subconscious impulse. Relying on the trust and the play of my dancers, Rachel Barker, Sarah Dudek, and Sarah Willie, I learned to trust myself, ask better questions, and accept the answers that came. I ultimately entitled my thesis piece “Spin Cycle,” the title reflecting an honest experience in that “things tend to come out in the wash.” I push the silver dial in, crank to the right, release, and listen as the water noisily and aggressively envelops the space within.

### Surfacing

As per my discovery in past chapters, sometimes our movement explorations are simply recognizing dialogue that needs to surface. My journey through “Spin Cycle” began with a one-minute explosion of movement that literally surfaced from somewhere below, coming out of me one night around 2 AM. Honestly, I was having some sort of emotional melt down and could not be comforted. “Call Mom, read a book, watch a movie,” anything to distract myself from the ensuing break down. I even prayed for divine intervention to put me at peace. Nothing would comfort me and I would not be comforted. I sat with my back against the front door in my living room in the dark, questioning whether or not to turn the locks hoping that some sort of danger could possibly have access. Perhaps that would be the best solution to the repressed hyperventilation that was breaking through my self-contained boundaries. If danger had access to me then perhaps I would have a valid reason for this ridiculous anxiety. I felt mentally paralyzed and vividly alone. I couldn’t seem to think, breathe, or sleep with my back up against a hard, cold metal door. However I could move and began without thought, plan, or design.

The movement flowed through in its own stream of consciousness. It arrived in drips and floods of force and flow. There I was in a pitch-black living room moving, moving, moving. Somehow I managed to remember what was happening and salvaged some benefit from this mad moment, turning the “angst” into a run-on sentence of a phrase. In the midst of a panic there was no judgment, definition, or standard to meet. I was only aware that this “thing” was in me and now out of me, honestly recognizing a very telling presence. The movement surfaced in a sphere of a tantrum that seemingly

had been there for years just waiting to be unleashed. It was violent yet poignant and not unlike but beyond any movement I had ever created. Yet I didn't create it. It was there and I finally honored it and, through the exploration it honored me. Most importantly, it healed me inside a dark moment.

The best part of this experience was that I retained a section of movement I felt more ownership for than anything I had created before. Teaching the movement to my three dancers helped me texturize and refine it into a tangible context. Watching the movement live in the other bodies taught me that "liking" the movement was not so important as believing the movement. I followed the belief fueled by the trust of my dancers and used it as a springboard for "Spin Cycle." In the rehearsal process the movement phrase went through its taming and refining period and finally arrived back to its wild initiation. Yet I often wonder what it would have looked like in its first moments – its birth so to speak. The movement was a live entity inside me and it had to surface, but I had to allow it.

In future movement creation, I hope I don't have to undergo an emotional break down every time I make up a piece, but I do hope I will create situations, spaces and places where my creative mind and body can allow both the honesty and vitality of movement and language already inside me to reveal itself. Thus, discovering an individual voice from my own lived experiences.

### Out of Africa, Out of Mind

I can ramble with the best of them. In the spirit of my new honesty philosophy, in creating "Spin Cycle" I accepted this characteristic of mine, not as a fault but as a

strategy I could use. I had developed several sections of movement, but rather than trying to define them immediately I decided to give some of the responsibility to my dancers, asking them to ramble rather than me. I created a movement game using a scene from one of my favorite movies, *Out of Africa*, where at a dining room table Denys demands a story of Karen. Karen insists he provide the first line and, picking up where he leaves off, she weaves the image he presents into a magical tapestry. I decided to reenact this scene with my dancers in a movement scenario saying, “I will be Denys, and you will be Karen.”

I began the first line of a potential phrase based on an image I saw in my head and my dancers would then pick up where I left off, making sense of ideas in ways I wouldn’t have been able to do on my own. This game provided rapid material to work from based on my ideas, but interpreted through my dancers. In certain moments of this experience I felt as if I was cheating as a choreographer by relying so much on my dancers to make sense of my information. Yet, this allowed them to be a part of the creative experience. I saw them taking ownership of my presented images, embodying their own interpretations, using their own voices to mount a conversation. Their willingness to engage in spontaneous expression fueled a dialogue that became very real. By allowing my dancers to participate, images transitioned out of my mind, into bodies, and subsequently choreographic form.

Using the idea of conversation I put them into a trio, solos, different duets, and back into the trio, as if they were vocally conversing with one another. I targeted repeated topics of discussion to build theme and variation. I pulled their individual movement motifs out of the dialogue and spoke the movement back saying, “This is your

home.” The “homes” were topics to bring back in the improvisation if the conversation became too random. The home destinations began to serve as punctuation marks and spontaneous movement became phrases and then choreography.

Before my graduate experience, I never gave much responsibility to dancers. I had always felt the need to be on top of everything and sitting in the director’s chair. “Spin Cycle” taught me that sitting at the table and not the director’s chair was much more combusive in the creative process and incidentally much more fun. At times I felt hesitancy giving up the reins and trusting that the right things would happen in the present as opposed to carefully crafted preparation. But the present served its inventive purpose, and because dancers and choreographer were all speaking at the table, the story thrived in each of us. I think Denys and Karen would have agreed, an evening or rather many evenings, were well spent. Whether in a dining room or a dance studio, a conversation ensues.

### The Table

The more “Spin Cycle” developed, the less I wanted a dance on an empty stage. I needed something in the space that revealed the movement as a conversation more than a dance. I brought a table into rehearsal to break up the “stage,” a piece of architecture for the dancers to relate with, other than each other. The table began as a secondary object, serving the dancers as a climbing object, creating levels and a diagonal counter point in the space. Gradually the table transformed into a character and soon had its own role in the conversation. In retrospect, the table represented a deconstruction happening in the

movement and the story. It became a symbol representing “expectations of being,” becoming undefined and ambiguous.

Sitting side by side on the upright table, the dancers begin “Spin Cycle” in the downstage right corner of the stage. Set vertically, the table organized a setting, just waiting to be messed up. Sounds of a washing machine cranked and water released initiate the sound score and dance. Water rising, swirling, and a machine increasing in spin speed fuel the volume of the sound, yet the dancers remaining frozen in anxious stillness. Minutes go by and after what seems an eternity, new music breaks out of the spinning tension, with the dancers leaping off and turning the table, as they began to hyperventilate in erratic and neurotic movement.

Throughout the rest of the piece the table stood up on two legs as if a door, knocked down in a moment of anarchy, and tilted sideways, thus creating a barrier between the dancers and the audience. It became an object to rotate and move in the space, setting up spatial diagonals between the dancers, and an object for the dancers to rest their backs against or hide behind. By the end of the piece, the table was located in the upstage left corner of the stage, flipped upside down and pointing back toward the downstage right corner where the madness had originally ensued. The table could represent a variety of meanings both literal and metaphoric but for me, it was a symbol of a belief system that began upright, and linear, and ended flat, upside down, and crooked.

I had no intention of relating the table to my own deconstructed experiences in dance and life. However as I watched the table in action with my dancers, I could see my own struggle not only in the search for an individual voice but for an individual belief system as well. I began graduate school in a very linear place. I thought I knew what

was expected of me as a student, as a person. Molding myself into these expectations through no real inner motivation mounted a revolution waiting to happen. I have since allowed myself to be tilted, turned, knocked down, set back up and put back down. In some sense I needed to be literally broken of my exterior façade. This sounds negative but it ultimately becomes positive, as I realized a needed change for greater integrity. In all honesty I am still searching for the undone bits and pieces, scattered sawdust, loose screws, and legs to rebuild from the ground up, but it's a construction I intend to architect and this may take some time.

### Un-taming My Mustangs

As the "Spin Cycle" performance drew near, a tame quality began to settle over the dancers. They were performing the choreography, but there was an element of danger missing I felt was important to the realness of the piece. I didn't want the dancers to feel safe or have a complete handle on the movement. I didn't want them to act wild but allow the wildness of the movement to handle them. I struggled to direct the dancers in this wildness and in a conversation about my desired aesthetic, I discovered they had some inhibitions of their own. They spoke about their discomfort with some of the movement qualities I asked them to perform. They felt I was asking them to portray a crisis of sanity and were hesitant about this motive in their performance. I never intended an insane intention to the piece, but because words surrounding this theme arrived in my dancers' interpretation, I wanted them to go there. If this image was showing up then I wanted to put the presence of it to work.

By pushing this image, the dancers began to bring a little of themselves into the piece, (realizing there was no escaping it now). Their individual quirks and inner dialogues arrived in their attack with the movement. Reaching new levels of insanity in their movement, they also found new levels of comfort. I began to miss the air of stress and angst and realized the movement and piece would be served with a presence of these emotions. The natural physicality in these emotions became the key ingredient and different places in the piece began to reach boiling points.

In retrospect, I wanted the dancers to taste the freedom of the discoveries I had made so far in my philosophy of honest language and individual voice. I wanted them to find their individual voices by canceling their reservations, going deeper and moving in wild ferocity. I directed to a certain extent, knowing that while I always demanded more of them, ultimately the dancers would need to find themselves inside this piece.

I believe they did. I saw fences come down and a stampede ensue, even with only three dancers. Had it been any one different dancer, the piece would have been completely different and I give my dancers a piece of the ownership for its creation. Through these wonderful dancers I actually lived some pieces of myself, some insanity, some violence, some risk taking, and some vulnerability. I am content if even for a moment, the dancers found a similar outlet of expression or, an individual relationship inside the wild creation and performance of “Spin Cycle.”

### Reading the Language and Editing the Dance

Thinking about my authorship in “Spin Cycle” I realize I didn’t really write the dance, I let the dance write itself. Sometimes the movement spoke to me and sometimes



I had to read it several times before I could interpret its paths. Choreography became not a required project but a place, a live thing that needed a little nourishment in the working process. Ultimately “Spin Cycle” survived and progressed on its own when given exploration and play as life-sustaining forces. I gained a lot of trust in movement through the process of choreography. Dan Wagoner, American modern dance choreographer, says of his creative process:

I am absolutely absorbed with movement. I love movement. And I trust movement. So all of my dances begin with movement and the basic problem or idea is always a movement problem. As I make movement choices, I dance them over and over, turn them around, add on, explore in as many directions as possible and then trust the movement will lead me somewhere interesting. (Wagoner, in Kreemer 31)

Trust movement, go deep inside the body for information, and honestly voice discoveries. In the beginnings of “Spin Cycle” I went into each rehearsal, as I would begin a new book with the attitude of “let’s see what happens.” With help from my three dancers I uncovered information that surprised us all with the alternate endings no one, especially me, ever expected. Experiencing what was indeed honest in the language of the dance required more than spontaneous improvisation. The material that came from improvisation needed strategic exploration through imposed structures. Documentation through both video and the dancers’ muscle memory defined the language we spoke. “Let’s see what happens” provided not only happenings but also material which was real, tangible and most importantly, individual to my own ideas. The evolving movement exposed itself alongside the inquiry. Boundaries dissolved and reservation left, as I watched the work unfold. I didn’t create the movement, it was already present and we brought it to life through honest exploration. I would love to say we harnessed the movement, but that would be lying. We didn’t ride the movement, it rode inside of us.

When you unleash something you don't always know if you're going to like it. It might be pointless and ultimately discarded. It might expose limitations in technical ability or ambiguities in meaning or possibility, but until movement is unleashed, we cannot know its destination and most tragically, we cannot know ourselves inside a journey which could lead us to other paths, other books, other characters, or perhaps even other languages. I am finally learning to read and write the language of my own body.

The final stages of my thesis choreography were the hardest. I found an internal language speaking to me and I began to speak it. The struggle was not a lack of information, but information saying the same thing. I had actually fallen in love with movement phrases that required amputation from the final product. I think of the clichéd break-up phrase, "If you love me you'll let me go." Well perhaps this doesn't literally apply to choreography but I found myself torn in a relationship with the movement. I felt all the movement belonged, but only some could stay. I discarded minutes and minutes of material and I actually felt a sense of loss. I am comforted in believing that all the movement still belonged. In the final representation of our exploration, what ultimately was discarded first had to be uncovered. Information found, not lost but set aside to make room for what was necessary in piecing the small journeys into the whole work. I played the role of editor, yet I didn't censor discarded movement. I simply made other choices ultimately, creating the space for what I felt to be an honest representation of the whole experience. To me, "Spin Cycle" spoke volumes and through the experience of making it, so did I.

## CONCLUSION

### BACK TO THOSE BOOKS, FILLING EMPTY PAGES

The body is often described as a blank canvas to be painted on. However, for me, the body is no longer a canvas, or even the paintbrush. The body is a library of information with layers of read and unread pages waiting to be turned to. Traditionally, we open the book from left to right, working our way down. We might make it through, bending the binding, spilling food, and creasing page corners as we journey through the book. There are times we start books and get stuck. Rather than creeping our way through the harder sections, we give up, never uncovering the journey that lay beneath a present page. This as many readers may argue, is no crime. We may stay, leave, or progress further in the stories that interest us or don't. We have our favorites where the pages are especially creased, disheveled and stained. Yet, consider the missed opportunity of never starting a book or path that would give us new information, perhaps changing the way we work or create. Maybe, even transforming who we are. What is there? We go to our interiors, find something to read and write, and bring dance language to life. We may become frustrated with the content and put the book down but we must never be afraid to pick it back up. We must never be afraid to write our own books.

I think of those empty journals in my room, waiting to provide a home for important words, lived experiences and most importantly, my voice. If I keep waiting for something better to write besides what I already own, I will miss the opportunity to grow

and live. For living and creating means writing my voice, my history, and putting my stamp on the way I uniquely see the world. I again refer to Dr. Cabot's philosophy of creative honesty:

To be truthful about our newborn impressions we must guard them as fiercely as a tigress guards her cubs. They are usually eaten by what they seem like. Scared by their nakedness, we cover them with the clothing of others' impressions. Then your own child, your own newborn truth or impulse is hard to see. "A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages (Emerson)." Creative honesty lives by watchfulness to catch and by courage to confess what we see. Creative listening encourages this and stimulates us to watch harder. It raises the level of energy in us. It makes us seethe, boil, and sprout, where before we had been standing about, waiting... Creative honesty risks pain and loss. In this it is unlike defensive honesty, which is safety-first affair without adventure in it. In creative honesty you follow clues not clearly revealed.... Creative honesty means not to keep what you have got, but to get ahead with its aide.... it must be given life by the spirit of creation. (Cabot 318-319)

There is something shattering in reading about the artist I long to be. To find true individuality is a desire I am now in the process of obtaining. I agree with Cabot, that the greatest growth and understanding comes out of real honesty in what we create, communicating our understanding of and in the world. In finding my individual voice as dancer and artist, I now know that my greatest potential lies in my choice to be honest, revealing who I am in the present. There is a time for reserve and sensitivity but for now in my creative journey, I need to overthrow the reserve and embrace the fearfully honest. For my own progression and perhaps even my survival, this seemingly rash course of action may be my greatest ally. I have mastered the art of reigning myself in to keep the peace or to stay the ever safe student. My research teaches me more important lessons I had to learn: I can honestly create free of regret, fear, authority, possible criticism, disapproval and in so doing, voice my individuality. I can trust movement and my

individual decisions to lead me in my creative endeavors. Heidegger teaches me that my own truths arrive in the things I create and Hay teaches me that in order for this to happen I must practice and do the creative work. I may not find right or wrong answers, but through practice I can find solutions in creative problem solving. In the work and consciousness that honesty requires, my individual voice surfaces.

I again state that honesty is not my motivation for dance making. I have discovered that creation could begin with the motive to lie or hide just as much as it begins with a search for truth. However, the body doesn't lie and I don't believe the dance does either. Even if we intend to create a lie, this lie says something about who we are or what we choose to explore. Honesty in some form is inescapable. Why not then use honesty as an avenue to discovery within the creative process rather than attempting to avoid the issue, only discovering it surfaces later and not on my terms? In any creation, in any growth, my terms, my convictions, and my voice are going to be at stake whether I want them to be or not. I may as well uncover my convictions, frankly voice them, and honestly answer the questions that are put to me from others, but more importantly from myself.

I know this is only the beginning of a creative philosophy. As I continue to work in the studio and in life, my philosophy may be challenged, changed, or perhaps even enhanced as I make new discoveries. But for the time being I am ready to continue my creative journey here with the knowledge that I do have my own unique language and my own unique voice if I allow it to surface. How valuable we prove the creative experience to be when by working and living through it, we become better people. For to apply the

virtues of honesty and voice in all areas of my life including dance, I believe it might just be possible for me to truly live. What greater discovery is there?

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